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W. Smith
from his Friend
Author
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L E T T E R

T O A

F R I E N D,

CONCERNING THE

EPIDEMIC FEVER

Of APRIL and MAY, 1778,

In YORK and its Neighbourhood.

CONTAINING

The History of the Disease, and the AUTHOR'S
Method of Treatment,

With a few useful Hints how to prevent it.

BY

THOMAS WITHERS, M. D.

Y O R K:

Printed by A. WARD; and Sold by W. NICOLL,
St. Paul's Church-Yard, LONDON; and by all the
Booksellers in YORK.

[Price SIXPENCE.]

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L E T T E R, &c.

S I R,

YOU intimated a wish that I would give you a short account of the EPIDEMIC FEVER of this season, now prevalent among us, together with the method of treatment which I found to be the most serviceable. You may be assured that it is with pleasure I now comply with your desire, as it affords me an opportunity of shewing my readiness to oblige you, and at the same time of gratifying my own natural propensity for musing and reflecting on medical subjects.

Without further preamble, therefore, I shall give you a short history of the disease, drawn not only from my own observations, but also from the concurring testimonies of others, who practise at this place with credit to themselves and good to their fellow-creatures.

In some cases the patient feels heavy and inactive for several days before the Fever makes its formal attack. In others its beginning is very sudden. Chillness and coldness, with more or less of a sense of tremor, are usually the first symptoms that appear. These are accompanied, or soon followed, with weariness, languor, loss of appetite, sickness, a dry skin, and a heavy dejected countenance. The pulse at this period is commonly

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monly smaller than natural, contracted, quick, and irregular. When the chilness and coldness have continued some time, which is variable in different cases, a general warmth gradually comes on, attended often with a greater fulness and strength in the pulse, redness in the face, and pain in the head. The strength and fulness of the pulse, with the increased heat of the body, is in proportion to the tone and vigour of the constitution, and consequently is never considerable in nervous and relaxed habits. The head-ach is in some cases extremely severe, and continues obstinately for many days. In others, who have the Fever to a high degree, it is very trifling, continuing only a few hours at a time, and soon disappearing.

During this stage there is generally thirst, a parched tongue, and a great dryness of the skin; though sometimes there are partial sweats which are not critical, and, if encouraged by external heat and stimulating medicines, seldom fail to aggravate every symptom of the disease, and to render it more violent, dangerous, and even fatal. In the 5th or 6th day of the fever, especially if blood-letting has been improperly omitted in full habits, a phrenzy sometimes comes on, with general inflammatory symptoms, and the patient is suddenly carried off. If on the contrary blood-letting has been used too freely in weak and debilitated constitutions, it sinks the patient so much, that a low delirium occurs, continues very obstinately with only small intermissions, and the patient generally dies about the 9th, 11th, or 14th day, with all the symptoms of the greatest debility and prostration of strength.

During the course of the Fever there is frequently a vomiting, which is very distressing, and continues many days. Sometimes the patient is costive, and sometimes

times a looseness comes on early in the disease; which, when not imprudently checked by astringent medicines, is found, in many cases, to prove critical, and if not to carry off the Fever entirely, yet to diminish its violence and shorten its duration. But if the looseness be too severe, and the constitution weak, it sometimes lowers the patient to such a degree, that if it be not moderated, he is apt to sink under the discharge. The urine, at the commencement of the Fever, is often pale, crude, and without sediment; as the disease advances, it becomes redder and more turbulent; and if the Fever end favourably, it deposits a copious sediment, which gradually becomes lighter, and diminishes in quantity, till the urine puts on its natural appearance.

In some cases, this Fever is attended with a cough, pain in the breast, and other symptoms of catarrh and peripneumony. In others, the rheumatism in the sides and joints occurs to a violent degree. Worms too are frequently a troublesome symptom during its progress, especially in young children, who are subject to it.—Dejection of spirits, particularly in people of rank and condition, whose habits are more irritable, and minds more apprehensive, is frequently very distressing and alarming; sometimes even at the first onset, but more generally towards the latter end, when the pulse sinks, and the debility and prostration of strength become considerable.—Symptoms of putrefaction in this Fever seldom occur in any great degree, though it now and then happens that, in the advanced stage of it, some putrefaction of the fluids is observed, which discovers itself by a want of firmness and cohesion in the denser parts of the blood, and by an uncommon foetid smell in the breath and stools, along with violent sickness, blackness about the mouth and lips, aphthous spots, hemorrhages and extreme depression of strength.

In some patients there is in the progress of the disease a partial determination of blood to the head, with redness of the face and eyes, throbbing of the temporal arteries, starting of the tendons, great sensibility to light and sound, a wild fierce look, obstinate watching, and a violent furious delirium, altho' the patient labours under great general weakness, and the pulse at the wrist is extremely low and depressed. In this case there is sometimes an inflammation of the brain, and then the delirium is very constant, till lethargic symptoms come on, and the patient dies.—In other instances of this Fever, a similar determination to the head takes place in the latter stage, attended with a violent delirium and the other concomitant symptoms above-mentioned, but without any inflammation of the brain. The delirium here is of a more transitory nature, and the patient has frequent remissions, in which he becomes sensible. If this case prove fatal, lethargic symptoms too come on before the patient expires.

With regard to the causes of the Fever, we may reasonably conclude, that the present state of the air is favorable to its rise and progress. The 10th, 11th, and 12th days in April were remarkably hot for the time of the year. Farenheit's Thermometer was at 68. Afterwards, for the last eighteen days in April, we had some cold chilling northerly winds, and sharp frost in the nights. For the first eight or nine days in May, the wind was generally either South or West, the weather for the most part mild and soft, a great deal of rain fell at different times, and the growth of vegetables was observed to be very considerable. Previous to the rain which lately fell, we had had very dry weather for many weeks, and there was a great want of moisture in the earth. For these last twelve days, the wind has been south or west; the thermometer about 60 or 62; and there
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has been frequent showers and sometimes heavy rains. The river Ouse has once overflowed its banks in several places. On May the 18th there was a violent storm in the night, with much rain; since which the air seems to have been purer, as well as more warm and soft. *—The coldness of the winter and of the spring would render the human constitution liable to be affected with inflammatory diseases. The great and sudden change of the weather in April, which we have taken notice of, from cold to heat, and from heat to cold, would be severely felt by most constitutions, which were not in vigorous health, and accustomed to active exercises. The wet and mild weather which we had in the beginning of May, would, especially in long Fevers, dispose somewhat to putrefaction. Along with this Epidemic, catarrhs, rheumatisms, small-pox, sore throats, sometimes of the ulcerous kind, and hypochondriacal complaints have been very frequent.—The predisposing and occasional causes of this Fever appear to be plethora and an inflammatory state of the constitution; debility, irritability, relaxation, and low-spiritedness; intemperance; excess in venery; neglect of exercise; too great fatigue either of body or mind; nocturnal watchings; great evacuations; fear, grief, and anxiety of mind; confined and putrid air; cold applied to the body when heated either by exercise, or in hot rooms, or in any crowded assemblies. That this Fever is sometimes contagious, no one can doubt; and yet the degree of the contagion is not considerable, except in a few cases where some symptoms of putrefaction have appeared.

With regard to the prognostic in this Epidemic, I would observe that it is not so fatal and alarming
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* Dr. White has for some years past kept a very accurate account of the state of the weather, and I have been obliged to him for his notes on that subject.

as some have represented it. Many have it very slightly, the chief symptom being a head-ach or a vertigo; and some have it very violently who get safely through it. The most dangerous symptoms are those of a phrensy from inflammation of the brain; or those from extreme weakness and depression of the vital powers, such as occur in relaxed and debilitated constitutions, and those which arise from putrefaction in the fluids, particularly when hemorrhages come on from a dissolution of the blood. Inflammatory symptoms I have frequently seen, and still more frequently those from weakness and debility; but the symptoms of putrefaction I have rarely had occasion to observe during the prevalence of this Fever.

The method of treatment which I have pursued, has been the following.

At the beginning of the Fever, if the patient be robust, plethoric and full, if the pulse be strong and quick, and the heat of the body great, along with a severe pain in the head, I recommend bleeding once or twice, as the case may seem to require, taking eight, ten, or twelve ounces of blood each time. This I do with a view to prevent an inflammation of the brain. But if bleeding my patient once be sufficient, I cautiously avoid repeating the operation, especially if the symptoms of general fulness are not very evident. In cases where the patient does not appear full or plethoric, yet if there be a cough, pain in the breast, anxiety, and difficulty of breathing, along with the fever, the loss of ten or twenty ounces of blood is sometimes of very great service. But this should be done with great caution, and be regulated by the constitution of the patient, and the severity of the symptoms. The inflammation of the lungs or pleura should be accurately distinguished from
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the rheumatism in the side, which may easily be done by the troublesome cough, and quick, hot, laborious breathing in the first, but without that sudden catching and stoppage in the breath that occur in the latter, and are accompanied at the same time with external foreness, pain from motion, and a more free admission of air into the lungs.—If a violent attack of the rheumatism shews itself along with this Epidemic, moderate bleeding is useful, although the constitution do not appear full and plethoric. But excessive bleeding in these cases is dangerous to the highest degree, and would no doubt in many instances prove fatal. For these rheumatic pains often disappear towards the middle of the Fever, and then if the patient has been bled to excess, he sinks under the distemper from mere debility and want of strength.—If in this disease the patient be of a weak and relaxed constitution, the pulse quick, feeble, and irregular, and the mind timid and dejected, blood-letting is extremely dangerous, and ought to be carefully avoided, although even the head and back should be severely affected with pain. In all cases where the practitioner is dubious concerning the propriety of blood-letting, my advice to him would be to omit it; for if the necessity of it be not evident, it is infinitely safer to avoid the operation than to have recourse to it. Although bleeding, when fully indicated, may be used at any stage of the Fever, yet towards the decline of it, when the patient is weaker, more caution is requisite. In this case, the strength of the pulse, the present symptoms of fulness, the danger of local affections, and the neglect of proper evacuations at the beginning of the Fever, along with the appearance of the blood when drawn, should be principally attended to. But if towards the latter stage of the Fever, as well as in any other, symptoms of great debility should occur alone, or with symptoms of putrefaction, general bleed-

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ing is the most dangerous practice that can be made use of. But if there be a local determination of the blood to the head, and consequently a violent irritation on the brain, with a furious delirium, when the pulse and general habit is so weak that general bleeding is not admissible, leeches or cupping is often highly useful, for the blood is drawn as near as possible from the part affected.

We proceed to the consideration of the use of Antimonials and Emetics in this Fever. If I am called in at the beginning, I have frequently ordered the following Antimonial mixture with success.

Pure water, four ounces ;
Simple Alexeterial water, three ounces ;
Emetic Tartar, two grains ;
Nutmeg water, six drams ;
Common syrup, two drams.

Let the patient take two spoonfuls of this mixture every twenty minutes till the whole be taken, unless it either makes him vomit, or gives him a loose stool, in either of which cases he is immediately to desist from the use of it. If it makes him vomit, let him drink a little Chamomile tea.

By the use of this Antimonial mixture, I have, in several cases, put an entire stop to the Fever at its commencement. I take care to premise blood-letting, if absolutely necessary, but not otherwise. If my patient be very weakly, I order a less dose, or the same dose at longer intervals ; sometimes one spoonful every twenty minutes ; sometimes two spoonfuls every five or six hours. In this last mode of administration, its use is continued for forty or fifty hours, but seldom longer.

In some cases the antimonial mixture, above prescribed, vomits the patient, especially if the stomach be foul; in others, it acts upon the bowels and carries off their putrid contents by stool; and in both, as well as in those in which it neither vomits nor purges, it promotes a gentle perspiration, but without heating and stimulating the system.

If the patient has already had a vomit of Ipecacuan before I see him, I order an ounce of the antimonial mixture to be taken every six hours, with a view to avoid vomiting, and then it generally procures a stool, and promotes perspiration.

If my patient has a looseness upon him, and an emetic is indicated from the foulness of the stomach, I do not then make use of the antimonial mixture, because it is apt to run off by stool, but I prescribe the following draught.

Simple Alexeterial water, an ounce and a half;

Ipecacuan, eight, or ten grains;

Tartar emetic, half a grain, or a grain;

Common syrup, one dram;

Spirituos cinnamon water, a dram and a half.

This emetic, worked off with a little chamomile tea, clears the stomach of its impurities, determines the blood to the surface of the body, promotes perspiration, and moderates the looseness. In cases of great foulness in the stomach, where there is no looseness, the above emetic may be given at first with advantage instead of the antimonial mixture.

With regard to vomits and antimonial medicines in general, it may be observed that they should not be repeated too often, nor continued too long, for by this

means they weaken and exhaust the patient. One vomit is commonly sufficient; tho' two may sometimes be necessary; but a third will generally be found pernicious. If the antimonial mixture given, not as a vomit, but at the interval of five or six hours, do not procure manifest relief in two days, it will be highly improper to continue it on; for it will disorder the stomach, and interfere too much with the salutary efforts of nature.

In some cases of this Fever James's Powder is given with great advantage, particularly at the latter stage of it, when the symptoms run high, and yet the patient is not too much weakened and depressed to undergo its operation. The patient, according to his strength, may take two, four, or six grains twice a day, made into a bolus with gum Arabic and common syrup; or he may take in the evening two or three grains in a bolus every hour, till he has taken three doses, provided the first or second do not excite sickness and vomiting. During the use of this powder, he should avoid acids or any very acrescent food, as they may dissolve more of the antimonial powder than is usually dissolved, and so render its operation too violent.

With regard to laxative medicines, if the patient be of a full habit, a dose of gentle physic at the beginning of the complaint is very proper, especially if he be costive, and the bowels loadened. For this purpose I have given half a dram of rhubarb, half an ounce or six drams of the bitter purging salt, or the following opening draught,

Common infusion of senna, three ounces;
Best manna, four drams;
Tincture of senna, half an ounce.

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Three spoonfuls to be taken immediately; two spoonfuls in half an hour after; and the remaining part in four or five hours if he have no stool.

But the dose of laxative medicines must be varied according to the patient's strength and constitution, some requiring a large dose, others a small one. A gentle laxative or two clears the bowels of their putrid load, diminishes the fulness of the system, prevents griping pains and uneasinesses in the intestinal tube, and is often of great benefit to the patient, if he have sufficient strength to undergo its operation with ease. But if he be very weak, low-spirited, and relaxed, a purgative is not necessary, and cannot be borne with impunity. A common glyster will be sufficient to procure a single stool, or the following bolus at bed-time.

Lenitive electuary, one scruple.

Turkey rhubarb, twelve or eighteen grains.

Simple syrup, a sufficient quantity.

The glyster or bolus is to be repeated occasionally; but the glyster, when it will answer, is preferable to the bolus in all cases of great weakness, and more especially towards the latter end of the Fever.

Mild sedative medicines, which are cooling and promote a gentle perspiration, without heating and stimulating the system, are very necessary ones to be employed in this Fever when there are inflammatory symptoms. The following are those which I have chiefly prescribed.

Salt of tartar, one scruple;

Juice of lemon, half an ounce;

Pure water, one ounce;

Common syrup, two scruples;

Spirituos cinnamon water, one dram.

This dose to be taken every four hours. Or,

Barley water, five ounces;

Pure nitre, half a dram;

Distill'd vinegar, two drams;

Simple syrup, half an ounce;

Nutmeg water, five drams;

Three or four spoonfuls to be taken every four hours.

For a similar intention too I sometimes prescribe a draught or mixture of the spirit of vitriol, the spirit of Minderirus, or the diuretic salt. These sedative remedies not only contribute somewhat to bring on a gentle discharge by the skin, but to moderate the circulation of the blood, to diminish the encreased heat of the body, to correct putrefaction, to obviate thirst, and to promote the flow of the urine. Their salutary effects are more certainly obtained when the patient can take them in a much greater quantity than is above prescribed; but if he cannot accomplish that point easily, large and frequent doses of them must not be forced upon him.

As to the practice of profuse sweating, it is a very dangerous one and ought never to be used in this Fever. It would certainly destroy more lives than the fever itself. With a view to promote sweating in former times, camphor, castor, pepper, ginger, mustard, serpentary, mithridate, theriaca, and such like rude absurd farragoes, were freely prescribed. The patient was confined to his bed, and smothered with cloaths; the curtains were drawn close; the room was immoderately heated; hot cordial drinks perpetually administered; warm bricks, or bladders filled with warm water constantly applied to the feet, and the cool fresh air cautiously excluded! These were the common fatal implements of destruction which the unwary too often levelled against the sick. If
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this language be warm, let the idea strong in my mind of the injury done to mankind by this practice, plead in my excuse, and be considered as a sufficient apology. This fatal method of sweating has often rashly checked and disturbed the salutary efforts of nature. It has rendered them weak, when they would have been strong; irregular, when they would have been regular; and violent, when they would have been moderate. It has aggravated every symptom of the Fever, and at last exhausted and destroyed the patient. It has brought on in different cases, either phrensies and other local inflammations, or the symptoms of debility and putrefaction. Practitioners in general seem now to acknowledge, that the cooling regimen is not only safe, but absolutely necessary, and yet too many never put it properly into execution. They are not sufficiently attentive to the degree to which it should be carried. In my own practice I keep the curtains almost entirely undrawn, and the door or the window is frequently or continually open, according to the weather and to the previous habits of the sick, for fresh air is most essentially necessary. When my patient becomes in the least hot and disposed to sweat, the quantity of the bed-cloaths is immediately diminished. If the chamber be small and close, I advise my patient to be removed into a larger. As the weather is not generally cold, there is either no fire in the room, or a very small one. The linen about my patient, his shirt and sheets, are often changed. The liquids with which he quenches his thirst and dilutes the blood, is toast and water acidulated occasionally with orange juice, milk and water, barley water, tea, whey, butter-milk, balm tea, and such like, either taken cold or at least cool. If the throat or lungs are affected with inflammation, the drink should be cool, but not cold. If when under this regimen, and taking the antimonial mixture or the saline draughts, my patient gently perspires,

spires, and the skin feels unctuous and soft, I consider it as a favourable event.—Several of my out-patients at the County Hospital, and still more of the poor who have attended upon me at my own house, have had this Fever, and I never could observe that the open air was in the least hurtful to them, but on the contrary beneficial, as none of them ever had the distemper in a violent degree. Several eminent physicians advise their patients not to confine themselves to their room or to their house at the first attack of a Fever, but to be carried into the open air, cautiously avoiding at the same time any bodily motion which would fatigue them. This method of treatment was recommended and practised by the late eminent Dr. Gregory, Professor of the Practice of Medicine at Edinburgh; and there can be no doubt, in mild and favourable weather, of its efficacy in moderating Fevers, especially in those who can bear the motion with ease, who are accustomed to be much abroad in the open air, and who are not liable to catarrhal and asthmatical complaints. But the promiscuous use of it no one would recommend, because it would be hazardous.

Blisters are a remedy in this Fever, which are sometimes beneficial. But they should not be used till the general inflammatory symptoms are abated, either by blood-letting or the continuance of the Fever. At the beginning of the distemper, when the general inflammatory symptoms are removed, I recommend a blister upon the head, or between the shoulders in violent pains of the head; and upon the breast or between the shoulders in the peripneumony when there is pain in the breast, with cough and great difficulty of breathing. In this last case blood-letting is premised. The evacuant and antispasmodic effects of blisters are principally of use here.—When the Fever has continued some time, when the inflammatory

matory symptoms are abated, and the nervous or putrid begin to shew themselves, a blister is useful upon the head, back, arms, and thighs, as antispasmodic and gently stimulant.—If there be a phrenetic delirium from inflammation of the brain at the commencement of the Fever, blistering the head, after the use of the lancet, is very serviceable. Or, if towards the latter stage of a nervous or putrid Fever, there be a low delirium, or a furious one, either with a local inflammation of the brain, or from irritation alone, a blister upon the head is to be recommended. A blister too is very useful in cases of stupor and lethargic symptoms, which sometimes occur towards the decline of this Fever. But the practitioner should be very cautious not to use a blister without necessity, particularly at the beginning of the distemper, and in very irritable habits, when its stimulant effects, if they should take place to any considerable degree, would be pernicious. The too frequent application of them in the same Fever, is certainly torturing the patient in a very improper manner.—The strangury should be prevented by the free use of diluting mucilaginous liquors, and the blister be removed in about fourteen hours. The cuticle should not be taken off before the application of the first dressing, which will prevent much pain and irritation.

Warm fomentations, or bathing the feet in warm water, when there are no symptoms of plethora, is in many cases of this Fever an useful practice, particularly in violent head-achs from an unequal circulation of the blood, and in obstinate deliriums from the same cause, both of which are often attended with coldness of the extremities from the want of an equable circulation. This remedy acts as a gentle stimulant and a powerful antispasmodic, and in cases of nervous and putrid Fevers is found beneficial. I have seen a fomentation of marsh-mallow

mallow roots and chamomile flowers take off a violent irritation of the nervous system, diminish the quickness of the pulse and render it more regular, restore a more equable circulation to the blood, remove anxiety, head-ach, starting of the tendons, and delirium, and bring on by degrees a composed and refreshing sleep. This remedy must not be used in cases of plethora, when the pulse is full, and the heat great and general, for its stimulus would rarefy the blood, quicken the circulation, and encrease the danger of the disease.—In the phrenetic delirium at the beginning of this Fever, attended with inflammatory symptoms, warm fomentations are very improper, till necessary evacuations have been made, and the general fulness of the system be diminished.—In using the fomentations, great care should be taken not to wet the bed-cloaths, and their application should be continued a proper length of time, for less than half an hour is of little or no consequence, and I have frequently ordered them to be continued an hour or two with very great advantage. Their salutary effects in taking off the stricture of the cutaneous vessels, and in promoting a gentle perspiration, have been very remarkable. We should be as cautious as possible to avoid fatiguing the patient, by giving him unnecessary trouble, especially if he be extremely weak and depressed, and likewise to prevent him from being exposed to the too free application of cold air.

The bark is another remedy which I have frequently used in this Fever with success, as a strengthener and a corrector of putrefaction. When the Fever attacks a person of a weak relaxed habit, and consequently is of the low nervous kind, I have prescribed the bark in the following manner.

Decoction

Decoction or infusion of the bark *, an ounce and a half ;

Aromatic tincture, a dram and a half ;

Common syrup, half a dram.

A dose to be taken every four or six hours.

Or,

Simple mint water, an ounce and a half ;

Powder of bark, a scruple or half a dram ;

Common syrup, half a dram ;

Spirituuous cinnamon water, two drams.

Directions as above.

Or,

Powder of the bark, a scruple, or half a dram ;

Simple syrup, a sufficient quantity.

Let this bolus be taken every four or five hours.

If the taste be disagreeable, it may be divided into two or three parts, each to be inclosed in wafer paper, and swallowed in a spoonful of tea or weak broth.

If the taste of the bark did not excite sickness, and at the same time the stomach was weak, the decoction or infusion was prescribed, for they are the lightest preparations of it. If the stomach could bear the bark in substance, the powder was preferred either in a draught or bolus, as being the most effectual way of giving it. The repetition of the remedy was determined by the state of the stomach, and the good effects of it in supporting the patient's strength.

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* The decoction and infusion of the bark were,

Powder of the bark, an ounce and a half, or two ounces ;

Spring water, three pints.

Boil the whole down to a quart, and then strain it.

Powder of bark, an ounce and a half, or two ounces ;

Water, pure or saturated with fixt air, a quart.

Let the whole stand together for twelve hours, frequently shaking the bottle, and then strain it.

Besides this, there are several other stages and conditions of the Fever, in which the bark is found useful. If the Fever be inflammatory at the beginning, and nervous or putrid in its progress, the bark, as soon as the inflammatory symptoms are removed, and the nervous or putrid make their appearance, is frequently of great service. When the Fever is putrid, I generally prefer the bark in substance, as being the most powerful antiseptic; and in these cases the dose is a dram every three or four hours, if the patient's stomach can bear it.

If the bark were given while any inflammatory symptoms remained, although there were some evident remissions of the Fever, it seldom or never had a good effect. But if there were evident intermissions towards the latter stage of the Fever, when there were no inflammatory symptoms, the powder of the bark, in large quantities, answered very well. If it purged, three or four drops of the thebaic tincture were added to each dose.

If my patient, as I have had several examples, lived in a low marshy country, and the Fever became remittent and intermittent, and at the same time did not yield to the bark, a change of air was insisted upon as absolutely necessary; and in several cases of extreme weakness, it was found highly beneficial. As soon as the patient was removed to a dry and elevated situation, the bark, which before did not agree, was taken in large quantities, without either purging or vomiting, and the cure was completed in a short time.

These are the cases in which the bark may for the most part be given with advantage; but truth obliges me to add, that I have met with several cases during this Epidemic, in which there were no inflammatory symptoms remaining, and which seemed, from the weak-
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ness of the pulse, and the putrescency of the fluids, to require the use of this powerful tonic, and yet the bark was so offensive, and caused such sickness and oppression at the stomach, that it could not have been continued without manifest disadvantage to the patient.

Opium is another remedy which I have prescribed occasionally in this Fever, but I hardly recollect above two or three instances in which I have found it necessary to use it at the beginning. In the latter stage of it, when the inflammatory symptoms were removed, when the Fever was of the nervous or putrid kind, when there was a violent irritation upon the brain, and a furious delirium resembling the maniacal one, without local inflammation, opium was given freely and with great advantage.

Thebaic tincture, fifteen drops ;

Pure water, ten drams ;

Aromatic tincture a dram and a half ;

Common syrup, two scruples.

To be taken immediately, and to be repeated in one or two hours, if the patient be very restless, and the delirium continue violent.

If, after taking the first dose, the patient become more composed, and the delirium abate, another was commonly sufficient. If on the contrary a first and second dose did not diminish the delirium, but it continued on equally violent, I ordered a third dose to be given in two or three hours. In such very dangerous cases, I have known Dr. Cullen give thirty, forty, or fifty drops of the Thebaic tincture at a dose, and with great success. A powerful remedy must be given in a desperate case, and tho' the physician should be moderate in his practice, when nature does not require his aid, and can do better

without it; yet when life is in imminent danger, and nature through excess of irritation turns her own powers against herself, medicine then must boldly interfere, and avert, if possible, the impending stroke. Thus that great physician has practised in these cases, but with a caution and circumspection that few ever possessed equal to himself. Opium, thus freely given, has sometimes a very successful operation, which is evident by an abatement of the delirium, a diminution of the irritation of the system, and a disposition to rest, with the pulse beating slower and fuller, a gentle moisture appearing on the skin, and the urine, from being clear, becoming turbid and depositing a copious sediment.

Opium too is useful, at any stage of the disorder, in moderating a looseness, which, instead of relieving the patient, runs on to such an excess, as to be in danger of exhausting and destroying him.

Thebaic tincture, five drops;
Chalk julep, an ounce and a half;
Nutmeg water, a dram and a half;
Common syrup, a scruple.

To be taken four, five, or six times in the day, as the looseness continues more or less violent.

In some cases of this kind, when the stomach has been very irritable, and a disposition to vomit has occurred, I have ordered the following pill instead of the preceding draught.

Pure opium, half a grain;
Extract of gentian, two grains.

To be taken two or three times in twenty-four hours, if the looseness do not abate.

In several cases of this Fever, when my patient was using a saline mixture in the day, I have prescribed the following draught at night, with a view to diminish febrile anxiety, and to bring on a gentle moisture upon the skin, but without any increase of external heat.

Thebaic tincture, fifteen or twenty drops;
 Common water, ten drams;
 Tartar emetic, a quarter or half of a grain;
 Spirituous alexeterial water, one dram and a half;
 Simple syrup, two scruples.

This draught is not given while any general inflammatory symptoms remain; but afterwards I have frequently used it, and not without success. I must observe too, that in local irritations, whether from catarrh or rheumatism, which are often complicated with this Fever, opium, after proper evacuations, by blood-letting and purgatives, is frequently indicated. In case of a catarrh, with a constant tickling cough, which disturbs the patient's rest at nights, the above draught of the thebaic tincture and tartar emetic is useful. It may sometimes be given with advantage without the tartar emetic, when we are afraid of the patient's vomiting. In the rheumatism, along with this Fever, the draught with the tartar emetic is often serviceable, in mitigating the pains, and promoting perspiration. For the same intention too, I sometimes give the following bolus at bed-time, and repeat it every other night for three or four times successively, desiring the patient to take no liquids for an hour after it, lest vomiting should be excited, and the medicine be rejected from the stomach.

Dover's

Dover's powder, ten, fifteen, or twenty grains ;
Common syrup, a sufficient quantity.

Opium too is used with advantage in this Fever, when any suppuration is taking place, with pain and a tendency to break externally, as an abscess forming in the breasts, or in any of the lymphatic glands. Twenty drops of the thebaic tincture is the dose I have usually prescribed at bed-time in these cases.

Musk is a remedy which I have not had occasion to order in this Fever, and therefore I can say nothing concerning its effects. It is esteemed a powerful antispasmodic, and has often been found useful in the latter stage of Fevers of the nervous and putrid kind, attended with symptoms of great irritability, and particularly in the high and furious delirium, without inflammation, which, as we have already observed, is sometimes easily distinguished from that which occurs in the phrensy or inflammation of the brain, by its being of shorter duration, and the patient's becoming sensible again in six or eight hours. But in this case I have hitherto generally preferred opium, though I have no doubt but that genuine musk, given in the dose of ten or fifteen grains, might be usefully employed, as I have seen in other Epidemics of a similar nature.

Wine and the volatile alkali are the only remedies remaining, which I have made use of as means for the removal of this Fever. They are to be considered as stimulants to the system, and therefore serviceable in all cases of great languor and torpor, in which the pulse and spirits are low, and the heat moderate, without any local inflammation. But when the excess of stimulant powers discovers itself, and the signs of plethora occur, with a strong, hard, quick pulse, great heat,
and

and symptoms of inflammation in some internal organ, wine and volatile alkali are very pernicious, they add fuel to the fire, and aggravate every symptom of the disease. Wine is a more effectual cordial than the volatile alkali. The last I have usually prescribed in the following forms.

Volatile salt of sal ammoniac, fifteen grains;
 Juice of lemon, as much as will saturate it;
 Pure water, ten drams;
 Cordial confection, ten or fifteen grains;
 Spirituous alexeterial water, two drams;
 Common syrup, a dram.

Or,

Volatile spirit of sal ammoniac, 25 drops;
 Common mint water, one ounce and a half;
 Compound spirit of lavender, half a dram;
 Aromatic tincture, half a dram;
 Common syrup, a dram.

One of these draughts to be taken every five or six hours.

But neither wine nor the volatile alkali should be used early in this Fever, except in those cases where long habit has rendered stimulants necessary to the support of the system. In such, the moderate use of wine and cordials may be allowed from the very beginning, when the Fever is not inflammatory, but of the low kind. In other cases, it is better to avoid the use of stimulants till towards the latter stage of the Fever, when they are both safer and more efficacious.

Wine is prescribed with great advantage in the low delirium of nervous Fevers, and whenever the patient is in a comatose state, from mere debility and depression of the nervous energy. In the high and furious delirium too,
 which

which we have so often had occasion to mention, arising from weakness and irritability, and unattended with any inflammation or abscess in the brain, wine has often a very happy effect in quieting the uncommon irritation of the nervous system, in diminishing the violence of the delirium, and in restoring the patient to his senses. A placid sleep sometimes comes on, which is succeeded by symptoms of returning health.

The quantity of wine to be given in a day, or, to speak more accurately, in twenty-four hours, is very different in different cases. The safest plan is to begin with a small quantity; and then, judging of the good effects of that, to encrease it as one finds occasion, remembering always the former habits of the patient, and attending carefully to the particular cravings of nature. A few glasses or a gill of wine may at first be given in a day, mixed with cold water or with barley water, and added to a little sago or panada. Those who are accustomed to wine may, in great languors or weaknesses in the constitution, take occasionally a glass or two of pure wine; and your hard-drinking men, in similar situations, must be allowed to have a much greater proportion. I have had several in this Fever who have required a pint, and some a bottle a day, taken in different forms. But great caution and judgment is necessary in these cases to avoid the extremes, of either allowing the patient to sink for the want of sufficient support, or of stimulating the constitution at an improper time, and without necessity. I repeat it again, that the effects of this valuable and powerful cordial must be carefully attended to; for if it do not increase the symptoms, it may, by persevering in its use, relieve them. If the pulse become fuller, slower, and more regular; if the delirium abate; if the patient is more composed and less irritable; if the skin be moister, and there be some re-
turn

turn of refreshing sleep, it is a certain sign of its salutary effects. On the contrary, if the pulse grow quicker and more irregular; if the heat of the body be encreased, with greater head-ach, anxiety and restlessness; and if the delirium become more violent, it denotes a too early or improper use of wine.—In all cases towards the latter stage of the Fever, when the delirium is furious, and the prostration of strength extremely great, and the practitioner is uncertain whether there be an inflammation of the brain, or mere irritation without any inflammation, a cautious trial of wine is a safe and laudable practice, recommended by the ablest physicians; but then the practitioner must be very industrious in his attendance, and minute in his observations respecting the operation of the remedy; and, beginning at first with a small dose, encrease it by degrees, as the urgency of the symptoms require, and the successful effect of it encourage him to proceed.

These, my good friend, are a few cursory remarks, thrown together in great haste, and with little attention to method, concerning the nature and treatment of the present epidemic Fever at this place. Your well known candour will render any apology for inaccuracies unnecessary. I might indeed have pleaded the want of leisure, along with the desire of transmitting to you these pages by the earliest opportunity; but as I know you will not thank me for my excuse, I had better save myself the trouble of making one.

These observations, though not so minute and particular as I could have wished them, will, I hope, be sufficient to give you a just idea of our epidemic Fever. Upon this supposition, Sir, I have obtained my end.

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The best method to prevent the attack of it, is to live regularly and temperately; to avoid excesses of every sort; to shun infected places, or to be in them as short a time as possible; to take regular exercise in the open air, but without fatigue; to use wine in moderate quantities, every one proportionably to his accustomed manner of living; to avoid, if possible, a poor unwholesome diet, or the constant use of salted provisions; to shun all the other occasional causes which we have before mentioned *; and to preserve the animal frame in its most vigorous state, that it may be the better able to resist the sedative effects of the present constitution of the air, of marsh and human effluvia, and of human contagion. Some have tried camphor to prevent the infection; but, in whatever manner it be used, it seems to have little or no effect. The closer the patient is kept, the more putrid, infectious, and fatal is the Fever observed to be. I have recommended, by way of a preservative, two ounces of the infusion or decoction of the bark †, or half a dram of the powder in a glass of red wine, to be taken two or three times a day, as a strengthener and antiseptic, to many of relaxed constitutions, who have been low spirited and apprehensive of the Fever; and this practice has not been without some appearance of success, none of those, as yet, having been affected with it. Some too have taken Huxham's tincture of the bark, particularly those whose stomachs, being very weak and relaxed, could not bear the bark with ease in any other form.

Simple mint water, ten drams;

Huxham's tincture of the bark, two drams;

Common syrup, half a dram.

To be taken three times a day on an empty stomach.

Several

* Vide page 5.

† Vide the prescriptions of the bark, page 17.

Several who were accustomed to bathe in the spring, asking my opinion concerning its safety during the present season, have been encouraged by me to continue the practice on, and I have found no cause to give a different advice.

Your accurate and critical eye, Sir, will undoubtedly lead you to remark, that I have omitted in these observations to mention any thing concerning eatables. This, however, is the less material, as few of those, who are ill, have any appetite for foods which are improper for them, particularly for animal foods. But when the Fever was more mild, and there was some appetite remaining, I recommended principally a vegetable diet, desiring my patient to consult his own taste, and choose for himself, allowing sometimes a little broth, and overlooking in a few cases, where perhaps my prohibition would have been of no avail, the liberty which some would take in the moderate use of light animal food*. I am,

S I R,

Yours &c.

THOMAS WITHERS.

* The author's inducement for publishing this letter, is the hope that it may be of some service in rendering the nature and treatment of this epidemic Fever more fully known, and if it answer that end in the smallest degree, he will think his trouble amply repaid.





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